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TIMBER CROPS for SOUTHERN FARMERS



Today, after 10 yearly cuts, the best of the Crossett Farm Forestry Forties has as much timber on it as ever, and it is timber of better quality. Little trees fill the openings left when saw-timber trees are cut and good trees of all sizes grow fast enough to give crops of pulpwood and sawlogs year after year.

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TIMBER CROPS FOR SOUTHERN FARMERS

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Careful management of the farm forest can pay good money and pay it yearly. This is what the 10-year record of the Crossett Farm Forestry Forties shows.

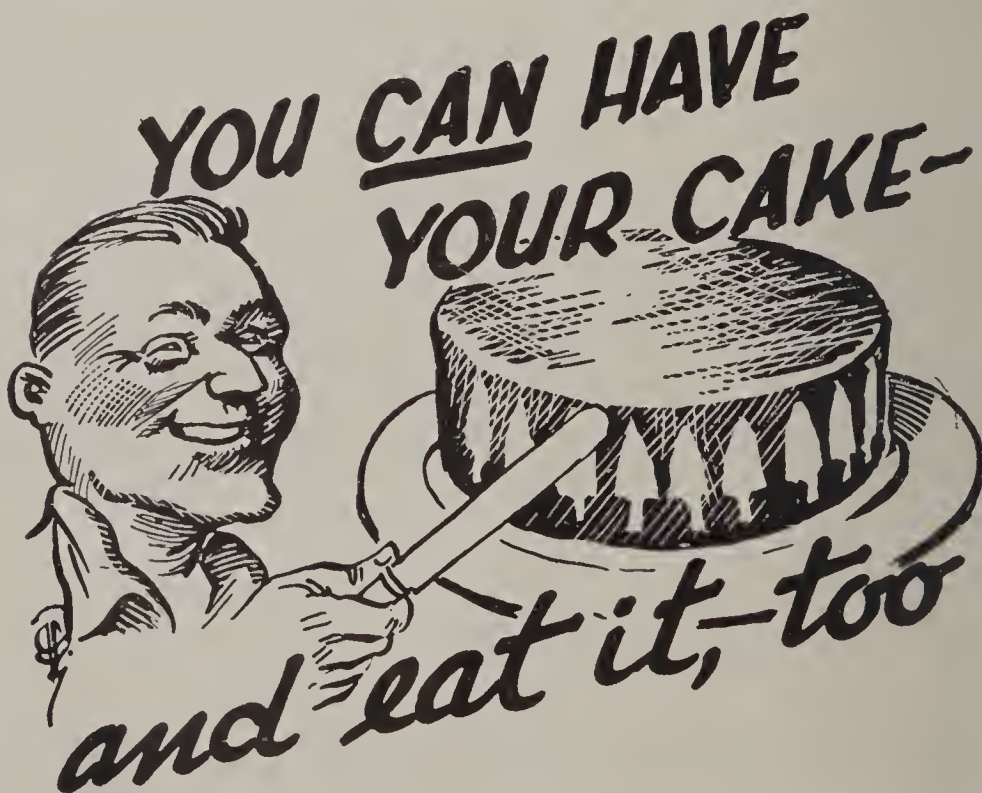
Trees have been cut from these tracts on the Southern Forest Experiment Station's experimental forest at Crossett, in southern Arkansas, every year for the past 10 years. In this time the best tract has yielded 122 thousand board feet of sawlogs, 280 standard cords of pulpwood, 170 cords of firewood, and 300 fence posts. When cut and delivered to the market, these products brought about \$6,000 all told, or an average of \$15 per acre *every year*. Yet today the Forty has as much timber on it as in 1937, and it is timber of better quality.

Not all farm woodlands can equal this record, but some could if handled the same way. Hundreds of thousands of farm forests in the South have the same mixture of loblolly and shortleaf pines and hardwoods. Many have equally good soils but most do not have the 6,800 board feet (Doyle scale) of timber per acre that stands on this best Crossett Forty. The record on this Forty can be approached by many farm forests if good forestry methods are carefully followed.

Farming the Forest.—In every way, the Forties are handled as if they were owned by a farmer who thinks of

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his trees as a crop and expects a timber harvest every year. He needs to spend time in planning and growing his timber just as he does in growing other crops. He often calls on the county agent or other specialists for help with livestock or row crop problems. The local forester should likewise be asked for help on timber growing.

Every year the cut on the best Forty takes out only as much timber as has grown that year. Each November or December the Crossett foresters take a paint brush and bucket of paint and mark the trees that are to be cut that year. Here are half a dozen young pines growing close together; better take three out for pulpwood so as to give the others some room. This 14-inch pine is growing fast but is a little too limby; sell it for sawlogs. A better tree nearby will fill its place. Heart rot will keep this red oak from getting more valuable, and that pine over there is leaning badly; cut them both before they get worse. Keep those fast-growing young pines; cut this large one whose growth has slowed down.

The rule for marking on the Forty is always the same: *Cut no more than has grown during the year, take out the diseased or crowded or limby trees first, then make up the rest of the year's cut from the more mature, better trees.* Practical operation under this simple rule varies

from place to place and the help of a local forester will probably be needed in making it apply to a particular farm forest.

When marking is done, and not before, cutting begins. This too goes by a simple rule: *Cut each marked tree into the product for which it is best suited on the available markets.* Here again expert local advice on markets should be sought. Most of the stems of the larger trees go into sawlogs. The smaller trees, and the tops of larger ones, make pulpwood. Some large post oaks are cut into fence posts. Low-grade rough hardwoods are made into firewood.

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One year's harvest from the best Farm Forestry Forty. Timber, rightly handled, can be as much a farm crop as corn or cotton.

The year's cut is not taken from all over a Forty. Instead, the foresters look over the whole stand and then mark trees and make the cut in the part that needs harvesting or improvement the most. This lowers cost, saves time in cutting and hauling, and avoids disturbing all the trees on the whole Forty every year.

Fire has been kept completely out of the Forties. Not one acre has burned over in the past 10 years. This is the way to handle wild fire—keep it out entirely. The local forester can give advice about the conditions where carefully controlled burning can be done with benefit.

Money Grows on Trees.—The first harvest on the best Forty, made in 1938, brought \$390 delivered to the market. It was all pulpwood—64 cords—from trees that had to be cut to put the stand in good growing shape. In 1939 and

later years, logs, pulpwood, firewood, and posts were cut each year. In 1947, the harvest was 11,660 board feet of sawlogs, nearly 8 cords of pulpwood, 17 cords of firewood, and 25 fence posts. It sold for \$660 delivered at the market, a gross return of \$16.50 per acre.

The returns from saw timber, which is the main crop, were higher in 1947 than in earlier years partly because prices had gone up, but also partly because the poorer trees were taken out in the earlier cuts. Most diseased and low-quality trees are now gone, and total growth has increased. The later harvests have had more high-grade timber in them.

The prices given so far are for wood cut and delivered to the market. Another way of selling the yearly cuts would be to mark the trees to be harvested and sell them as stumpage—that is, standing—to a timber operator. As stumpage, the total 10-year harvest from the best Forty would have been worth about \$1,740, or \$4.35 per acre yearly as against \$15 delivered. Over the past 10 years, sawlogs averaged \$10.60 per 1,000 board feet on the stump and \$20 at the mill. Pulpwood takes more labor to cut and haul than sawlogs. It was worth an average of \$1.20 per cord on the stump, but \$7 at the mill. Firewood was sold at \$9 per cord delivered.

Some of the difference in price between delivered wood and stumpage is for tools, gasoline, and so on. But most of it is for work that the farmer could do himself during the winter, when he may have a little slack time from his other crops. Harvesting the 1947 cut took 52 8-hour man-days of work. The return for stumpage and labor was \$1.25 per hour after all expenses for use of equipment, axes, saws, a team or a tractor, and a truck or wagon were allowed for.

But the Forty had a good stand of timber to start with. Will the same system of fire protection and yearly cuts work on a poorer stand? Yes, it will.

When the best Forty was laid out, a nearby run-down stand of about 34 acres was also put under management. Instead of cutting as much as grew each year, the foresters cut less. These light cuts built up the stand from about 1,900 board feet per acre of rather poor pines and hardwoods in 1937 to 3,000 board feet of good pine in 1947. The products were worth \$555, or \$1.60 per acre per year, on the stump. Delivered at the market, this wood brought \$2,660, or \$7.80 per acre per year. This was enough to pay all the expenses and leave the owner something for his time and trouble. But the real profits will begin to

Farm This and This



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come in the next few years, now that the stand has been built up with high-quality young pine trees.

Try it Yourself.—What the Crossett Farm Forestry Forties show is that timber can be a yearly crop, just like cotton, corn, or potatoes. The woods are just as much a part of the farm as the cultivated fields. A farmer with a good woodland can make up to a dollar or more an hour by doing his own work in his farm woods, right at home.

The Crossett forests are on good soil and near good markets. On some farms the soil is poorer and trees will not grow as fast. Prices may be lower if markets are far away. Some farmers may not find a buyer for low-grade hardwood, but will have to use it for firewood themselves. Income will vary. Some farm forests are poorer than the run-down Crossett stand, but some are better than the best Crossett Forty. It is important for the farmer to know what kind of a forest he has.

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With help from a forester, a man can learn to farm his forest as well as his fields. The hardest thing to learn is what trees to cut and how to make the best sales, and the forester can teach him that. Wild fire has to be kept out too, and theft and other losses prevented.

In many ways, though, timber is generally an easy crop to raise. It does not need to be cultivated or fertilized. Improvement can be accomplished with ax and saw. It stands dry spells and wet seasons much better than row crops do. It can be harvested when the owner has the time. If prices are poor, it is a crop that can be left standing until the market improves. As with other crops, the returns are usually greatest if the farmer does the harvesting himself.

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